

healthy LIVING

Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare | October 2005 Issue

With the help of his wife Sharon,
Dr. Walker

is on a mission
to bring digital mammography
to our community.

With Sharon's friends behind
him, he is not alone.



Tallahassee Memorial
HealthCare

TMH to Open First Digital Mammography Unit in the Big Bend Region

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Although cancer ultimately took the life of Tallahassee resident Sharon Ewing Walker, the energy and spirit she displayed throughout her battle was an inspiration to all who knew her. Now, less than a year later, Sharon's family and friends are giving a gift to the community in her memory - the gift of digital mammography.

The Tallahassee Memorial Sharon Ewing Walker Breast Health Center, offering digital screening mammography, is scheduled to open at 1303 East Sixth Avenue in early 2006. The Center will provide an environment with the convenience of extended operating hours and pads for comfort, according to Robin Schroeder, Administrator of Women's & Children's Services at Tallahassee Memorial. It will be conveniently located next to Tallahassee Memorial's A Woman's Place, a community education, counseling and retail center designed for women by women.

"We are placing the Sharon Ewing Walker Breast Health Center next to A Woman's Place because we are already serving the needs of women at that location," says Schroeder. "A Woman's Place houses a boutique offering skin care products, jewelry and clothing, plus breast prosthesis and image recovery services. Community education classes and 'Spirit of Women' events are also conducted there and counseling services for women are available for a variety of issues, including genetics counseling." Counseling services are provided by Judy Welch, a Registered Nurse and Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

For many years, Tallahassee Memorial provided screening mammography services, but discontinued its program several years ago. In 2004, TMH announced its

intentions to bring mammography screening services back to TMH in cooperation with Radiology Associates.

Proceeds from The Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare Foundation's Golden Gala XXI in 2004 were earmarked for the creation of a new Mammography Center. In early 2005, family members and friends of Sharon Ewing Walker created the fund in her memory with the intention of bringing digital mammography to the Tallahassee area. More than 387 individual donations were received by the Foundation in her memory.

"When we learned that TMH wanted to bring digital mammography to Tallahassee, we thought it would be

great way to honor Sharon," says Claude Walker, her husband of 20 years. "Digital mammography is leading edge technology, and Sharon always felt that it was a mammogram that saved her life when she was first diagnosed with breast cancer in 1996."

Christy Harrison, Administrator of the Tallahassee Memorial Cancer Center says she

is excited about what this means for TMH's cancer program. "We're delighted that gifts from Golden Gala donors and Sharon Walker's family and friends are enabling us to bring the first digital mammography services to the Big Bend region. It is in keeping with our Cancer Center's mission to not only provide leading edge cancer treatment services, but to offer even greater access to cancer screening and prevention services."

The Sharon Ewing Walker Breast Health Center expects to begin scheduling appointments in early 2006. For more information, call (850) 431-LIFE (5433).



Sharon Walker (front center) surrounded by friends.

New Study Finds Some Women Fare Better With Digital Mammography

Computer-based digital mammography is better than conventional film mammography at detecting breast cancer in certain groups of women. That's the preliminary finding of a study conducted by the American College of Radiology Imaging Network and published in a special online edition of the New England Journal of Medicine on September 16, 2005.

Nearly 43,000 women in the United States and Canada, who had no signs of breast cancer, participated in the Digital Mammographic Imaging Screening Trial sponsored by the National Cancer Institute. They underwent both digital and film mammography at the time of enrollment, and were asked to return one year later for a follow-up mammogram.

"Overall, film and digital mammography were equally accurate," says Elta Pisano, M.D., a professor at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, and lead author of the study. "But for women with dense breasts, women under age 50 and women who were pre-and perimenopausal, digital was significantly better."

Results of previous studies have shown that screenings with annual mammograms reduce the rate of death from breast cancer in women 40 and older. Considering that film mammography has limited sensitivity for the detection of breast cancer in women with dense breasts, researchers assessed whether the use of digital mammography would

avoid some of the limitations. They found that cancers detected by digital mammography and missed by film mammography included many invasive cases and early cancer that

to the study. Many of the experts involved in the trial see digital mammography as the future of breast cancer screening. They say that although the availability of digital



had not spread to neighboring tissue. Film mammography has been used for more than 35 years. Positioning and compression of the breasts are identical in both a film and a digital mammography examination. Standard film mammography is also similar to digital mammography in that x-rays are used to produce an image of the breast—but digital mammography uses less radiation.

While standard mammogram images are recorded on large sheets of photographic film, digital images are captured electronically and viewed on a computer monitor. They are stored on a computer and their magnification, brightness and contrast can be changed after the examination to help the doctor more clearly see certain areas. Digital mammography images can also become a part of a patient's electronic medical record, according

mammography is increasing, it's still limited—making up about eight percent of the market today. "The important thing," says Robert Smith, director of cancer screening for the American Cancer Society, "is that women receive mammograms on a regular basis, regardless of which technology they use." Dr. Pisano agrees. "It is important that women get screened when they are supposed to be screened and not wait to get a digital."

According to National Cancer Institute figures, an estimated 211,240 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in the United States this year. More than 40,000 women will die of the disease. Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in women—just behind lung cancer.



Tallahassee Memorial
Sharon Ewing Walker
Breast Health Center

Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare

For information about cancer services at Tallahassee Memorial Hospital, call 850-431-CARE (2273) or visit the Tallahassee Memorial Cancer Center at www.tmh.org

■ October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

The pink ribbon lapel pin has become a powerful symbol to increase awareness about breast cancer.

Throughout October, the pink ribbon is worn to honor survivors, remember those lost to the disease, and to support the search for a cure.

In 2005, an estimated 211,240 women will learn they have breast cancer, 1,690 men will get the same news, and 40,870 people are expected to die from the disease, according to the American Cancer Society.



"Sharon was such a dynamic person who never met a stranger. She was so full of energy and enthusiasm and it was contagious. She remained so positive throughout her entire ordeal. Even at the end, she was more concerned about others than herself."

— Marie Long



"I met Sharon about 19 years ago when she moved to Tallahassee as a new bride. I will always remember Sharon as my friend with a great zest for life, full of energy and enthusiasm for what ever lay before her. I miss her sense of humor and I can still hear her hearty laughter."

— Georgia Turner



"Sharon embodied life. She was such an amazing person who would not just sit down and accept her diagnosis. She had to make the fight worthwhile. She had to turn it around and make something positive out of it."

— Susan McAlister

Did You Know?

Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam as part of a regular physical examination by a health care professional preferably every three years. Women 40 and older should have a clinical breast exam and a screening mammogram every year.

Source: American Cancer Society

Prevention:

The use of mammography, clinical breast examination, and finding and reporting breast changes early, offer women the best opportunity for reducing the breast cancer death rate through early detection.

Source: American Cancer Society